

Harry S. Truman, 1946

June 15 [137]

Q. Are they going over there?

THE PRESIDENT. No, they are not. They will send representatives.¹

[15.] Q. Mr. President, do you care to say what you will do about the emergency strike legislation, if it comes to you with the Case bill rider on it?

THE PRESIDENT. I never comment on legislation until it is before me. Then I will analyze it, and I will let you know more about it.

[16.] Q. Mr. President, Senators O'Mahoney and Overton proposed a plan under which the Federal Government contribution

to the District would have some relationship to the amount of tax-exempt property—Government property—here; and also are proposing that the lump sum be raised from 6 to 10 million dollars a share. Have you any comment on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT. I am familiar with the so-called Overton plan. I was on the Appropriations Committee in the Senate when Senator Overton worked out that bill. I don't know anything about the new plan, but the suggestions and the equitable approach to it that the Overton plan followed is a good thing. I was in favor of the Overton plan when it was first suggested.

Q. And what about the boost in the lump sum?

THE PRESIDENT. The Overton plan contemplated the boost in the lump sum.

Reporter: Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: President Truman's sixty-ninth news conference was held in his office at the White House at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, June 14, 1946.

137 Letter to the Chairmen, Congressional Committees on Military and Naval Affairs on Unification of the Armed Forces.

June 15, 1946

My dear _____:

One of the most important problems confronting our country today is the establishment of a definite military policy.

In the solution of this problem, I consider it vital that we have a unified armed force for our national defense.

At my request the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy have made a sincere effort to settle the differences existing between the services on this question. They have made splendid progress.

They have reached an agreement on eight important elements of unification, and with reference to the four upon which there was

not full agreement, their differences are not irreconcilable.

On May 31, 1946 the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy delivered a report to me of the results of their efforts. I have replied to them today stating my position on those points submitted to me for decision.

I enclose herewith a copy of the report of the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, together with a copy of my reply to them.

You will note that there are now presented twelve basic principles upon which the unification of the services can be based.

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They are as follows:

1. *Single military department.*

There should be one Department of National Defense. It would be under the control of a civilian who would be a member of the cabinet. Each of the services would be headed by a civilian with the title of "Secretary." These secretaries would be charged with the internal administration within their own services. They would not be members of the cabinet. Each service would retain its autonomy, subject of course to the authority and overall control by the Secretary of National Defense. It is recognized that the services have different functions and different organizations and for these reasons the integrity of each service should be retained. The civilian secretaries of the services would be members of the Council of Common Defense and in this capacity they would have the further opportunity to represent their respective services to the fullest extent.

2. *Three coordinate services.*

There should be three coordinate services—the Army, Navy and Air Force. The three services should be on a parity and should operate in a common purpose toward overall efficiency of the National Defense under the control and supervision of the Secretary of National Defense. The Secretaries of the three services should be known as Secretary for the Army, Secretary for the Navy, and Secretary for the Air Force.

3. *Aviation.*

The Air Force shall have the responsibility for the development, procurement, maintenance and operation of the military air resources of the United States with the following exceptions, in which responsibility must be vested in the Navy:

(1) Ship, carrier and water-based aircraft

essential to Naval operations, and aircraft of the United States Marine Corps.

(2) Land-type aircraft necessary for essential internal administration and for air transport over routes of sole interest to Naval forces and where the requirements cannot be met by normal air transport facilities.

(3) Land-type aircraft necessary for the training of personnel for the afore-mentioned purposes.

Land-based planes for Naval reconnaissance, anti-submarine Warfare and protection of shipping can and should be manned by Air Force personnel. If the three services are to work as a team there must be close cooperation, with interchange of personnel and special training for specific duties.

Within its proper sphere of operation, Naval Aviation must not be restricted but must be given every opportunity to develop its maximum usefulness.

4. *United States Marine Corps.*

There shall be maintained as a constituent part of the Naval service a balanced Fleet Marine Force including its supporting air component to perform the following functions:

(1) Service with the Fleet in the seizure or defense of Advanced Naval Bases or for the conduct of such limited land operations as are essential to the prosecution of a Naval campaign.

(2) To continue the development of those aspects of amphibious operations which pertain to the tactics, technique, and equipment employed by the landing forces.

(3) To provide detachments and organizations for service on armed vessels of the Navy.

(4) To provide security detachments for protection of Naval property at Naval stations and bases.

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5. *Council of National Defense.*

To integrate our foreign and military policies and to enable the military services and other agencies of government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving our national security. The membership of this council should consist of the Secretary of State, the civilian head of the military establishment, the civilian heads of the military services, and the Chairman of the National Security Resources Board, referred to below.

6. *National Security Resources Board.*

To establish, and keep up to date, policies and programs for the maximum use of the Nation's resources in support of our national security. It should operate under the Council and be composed of representatives of the military services and of other appropriate agencies.

7. *The Joint Chiefs of Staff.*

To formulate strategic plans, to assign logistic responsibilities to the services in support thereof, to integrate the military programs, to make recommendations for integration of the military budget, and to provide for the strategic direction of the United States military forces.

8. *No single Military Chief of Staff.*

In the opinion of the War Department, the military establishment should contain a single military Chief of Staff, who would serve as principal military adviser, available to offer advice when differences of opinion arise among the military heads of the several services. The Navy feels that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should be the highest source of military advice. The War Department is willing to omit the feature of a single Chief of Staff.

9. *Central Intelligence Agency.*

To compile, analyze, and evaluate information gathered by various government agencies, including the military, and to fur-

nish such information to the National Defense Council and to other government agencies entitled thereto. It should operate under the Council. An organization along these lines, established by Executive Order, already exists.

10. *Procurement and Supply.*

There should be an agency to prevent wasteful competition in the field of military supply and procurement through joint planning and coordination of procurement, production and distribution.

11. *Research Agencies.*

There should be an agency to coordinate the scientific research and development of the military services.

12. *Military Education and Training.*

There should be an agency to review periodically the several systems of education and training of personnel of the military services and to adjust them into an integrated program.

A plan of unification containing these twelve elements has my unqualified endorsement. The Secretary of War, the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Chief of Naval Operations have assured me that they will support such a plan.

It is my hope that the Congress will pass legislation as soon as possible effecting a unification based upon these twelve principles.

Very sincerely yours,

HARRY S. TRUMAN

NOTE: This is the text of identical letters addressed to the Honorable Elbert D. Thomas, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs; the Honorable David I. Walsh, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Naval Affairs; the Honorable Andrew J. May, Chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs; and the Honorable Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House Committee on Naval Affairs.

For the President's letter to the Secretaries of War and Navy upon receiving their joint report of May 31, see Item 138.